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Analysing governance in tourism value chains to reshape the tourist bubble in developing countries: the case of cultural tourism in Uganda

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Several studies found larger benefits for communities when local stakeholders could participate in the tourism value chain by ‘linking’ their labour, products and services to the sector. However, the establishment of local linkages is difficult because of the complexity of the tourism system that consists of multi-sectoral and multi-scalar relationships. Moreover, in developing countries, empowered stakeholders tend to organise the tourism value chain vertically in which tourists are led in a spatially and socially confined trajectory in the destination, the so-called tourist bubble. This paper analyses the effect of governance in the tourism value chain on the establishment of local linkages to reshape the social and spatial boundaries of the tourist bubble in Uganda. Specifically, the possibilities of cultural tourism are explored as one particular way to reshape the bubble, that is centred on nature-based and ecotourism focuses. Results show that cultural activities can reshape the social boundaries of the bubble, while the catalyst role of cultural tourism developments is less successful in reshaping the spatial bubble boundaries. The national scale is pivotal to ensure that (1) local stakeholders are empowered to overcome existing barriers to enter and (2) international stakeholders are given incentives to reshape the bubble.

Keywords: tourism governance; tourism value chain; tourist bubble; local linkages; power relations; cultural tourism

1. Introduction

Recent studies have provided evidence that linking labour, products and services of local communities in developing countries to the tourism sector, as described in the concept of local linkages, can provide a lever for sustainable regional development (Adiyia, Vanneste, Van Rompaey, & Ahebwa, 2014; Mitchell & Faal, 2008; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). However, the establishment of such linkages is not straightforward. The interplay between different scalar stakeholders from the public and the private sector as well as the civil society gives rise to a tourism value chain in which a multitude of stakeholders both compete and cooperate (Boyd & Butler, 1996; Bramwell & Meyer, 2007; Kaplinsky & Morris, 2000).

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These multi-scalar and multi-sectoral characteristics of the tourism value chain generally result in power imbalances where each stakeholder tries to derive a larger share of value by gaining more power (Ford, Wang, & Vestal, 2012). This means that, when making an overall assessment of the regional development impacts of tourism, stakeholder interactions and power relations do not automatically fuel tourism development in a way that naturally leads to regional and/or local development (Kauppi, Saarinen, & Leinonen, 2009). Therefore, stakeholder interactions and power relations in tourism need to be actively managed, dealing with the multi-scalar and multi-sectoral characteristics of the value chain, in order to expand tourism to regional development by maintaining viability of the tourism value chain, and by maximising pro-poor aspects of tourism (Boyd & Butler, 1996; Kaplinsky & Morris, 2000).

In developing countries, the establishment of local linkages to the tourism value chain, and thus the poverty alleviation potential of the sector, is even more difficult because empowered stakeholders tend to organise the value chain vertically. This means that tourists are led from the airport to the main attractions and transported back to the airport, using a spatially and socially confined trajectory in the destination, the so-called tourist bubble (Cohen, 1972; Jaakson, 2004). When the tourist bubble is strongly delimited and tourists only rarely move outside this bubble, sustainable regional development is hampered by a dependency on the willingness of empowered stakeholders to link local labour, products and services to the value chain.

Therefore, as Van der Duim (2008) suggests, research into the governance of tourism value chain relations provides further insights into the role of tourism as an engine for sustainable regional development in developing countries. Hence, the aim of this paper is to study how tourism governance impacts the creation of local linkages within the tourism value chain, thereby influencing the regional development potential of tourism in developing countries by shaping the social and spatial delineation of the tourist bubble. Cultural activities are selected as a particular strategy to overcome limited linkages between tourism products and the local community. While nature-based tourism and ecotourism accents are dominant in most developing countries, establishment of linkages based on cultural activities and handicrafts is an additional strategy by which local communities can be involved and participate in the tourism value chain (Korutaro, Ahebwaa, & Katongole, 2013; Mitchell & Faal, 2007).

The paper is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 elaborate the theoretical basis upon which the paper is hinged. It explains the role of governance in the tourism value chain as an engine to reshape the tourist bubble for sustainable regional development in the tourism–development nexus. Section 4 describes the research methods used for this study. Section 5 briefly presents the relevance of the case. Sections 6 and 7 present the results and discusses the implications of tourism governance on sustainable regional development. Finally, we conclude by giving recommendations for both policy and future research.

2. Governance in tourism value chains

Tourism is a global industry that can provide a mechanism for wealth transfer from the rich to the poor (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). However, people living nearby tourist attractions also bear disproportionate costs of tourism (Archabald & Naughton-treves, 2001). Value chain-based analyses (VCAs) are most suitable for tourism impact assessments on local households in developing countries (Meyer, 2009; Mitchell, 2012). VCAs are able to take most effects of tourism on the host economy into account, to assess the competitiveness of the tourism products and to focus on local economic development. In a tourism

value chain, actors are interlinked and they collaborate to produce and distribute value for tourists (Song, Liu, & Chen, 2012). In its most basic form, the tourism value chain consists of the interrelations between 'nodes' formed by actors of tourism planning, primary suppliers, tourism intermediates, and tourists (Romero & Tejada, 2011; Song et al., 2012).

The structure of these interactions creates experiential value that can be attained by tourists and a platform for local entrepreneurs and community stakeholders to link their labour, products and services to the international tourism system. (Re)configuration and coordination of these interrelations to provide local access to the tourism value chain are key in a sustainable tourism and development context. Governance of value chain relations should provide instruments to enhance democratic processes by aligning different stakeholder's capacities and aims, adjust the decision-making to specific contexts and overall goals, and provide means for practical progress (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

2.1. Implications of tourism planning for governance of the tourism value chain

The governance process of tourism value chain relations, and hence the possibilities to create a more socially and spatially inclusive structure in the tourism value chain, is complicated by the multi-scalar and multi-sectoral characteristics of tourism. A functional governance situation should thus manage scalar processes and networked operations between a multitude of stakeholders that together shape the outcome of tourism development on lower scales (Hall, 2011; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). In this process, the state is one of the key mediating stakeholders in the web of relations of tourism value chains as it has authority and justification to deal with issues of collective interests (Bramwell, 2010, 2011). States can do so by imposing requirements as well as incentives for tourism-related stakeholders to behave in a certain way (Bramwell, 2011).

Because of this central position of the state in the governance of the tourism value chain, the multi-level planning system of a country is a central factor in defining the structure of value chain relations (Romero & Tejada, 2011; Song et al., 2012), thereby having a key influence on the potential to enable or constrain the creation of local linkages. To optimise tourism impacts, tourism planning should be integrated in the overall development strategy, plans and contexts of a country or region (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Kauppila et al., 2009; Timothy, 1998). Timothy (1998) points to four types of cooperation that need to be present to reach this integration in the planning system:

- (1) cooperation between government agencies, reducing competition or mismatches between governmental departments;
- (2) cooperation between levels of administration, dealing with the scalar structure of tourism planning responsibilities;
- (3) cross-border cooperation between same-scale administrative units, dealing with potential cross-border resources and environmental, social and economic imbalances between areas;
- (4) private and public sector cooperation, dealing with the diversity of tourism-related stakeholder groups.

To create an analytic benchmark, the requirements of integrative tourism planning as defined by Timothy (1998) can be interpreted by two dichotomies: internal versus external (within the public domain versus across public, private, voluntary domains and across territorial units) and horizontal versus vertical (on the same scale versus across scales) governance characteristics (Perkmann, 1999). When combined, they result in four spheres whose

Table 1. Spheres of multi-scalar and multi-sectoral tourism governance.

	Internal	External
Horizontal	Alignment and coordination of efforts between different policy domains (tourism, culture, economic development, spatial planning, . . .) on the same scale	Alignment and coordination of efforts between the public sector and private, community and voluntary sector stakeholders, potentially across territorial units, on the same scale
Vertical	(Multi)scalar configuration of tourism-related activities, responsibilities and strategies of governmental tourism management	Alignment and coordination of efforts between the public sector and private, community and voluntary sector stakeholders that operate on different spatial scales, territorial units and in different network connections

specific, contextual content shapes the governance system of the tourism value chain in specific places (Table 1).

Complicating factors can be added to this scheme. In developing countries, the control over natural resources and the crucial role of tourism planning and policy-making is generally regulated by the government or by government-led agencies, which tend to limit local involvement (Nelson, 2012). Yet, involvement of lower level governments is of vital importance to successfully implement tourism initiatives on the national scale to alleviate poverty (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Furthermore, the governance situation regularly empowers international stakeholders and dominant local elites to allow them to create barriers for local stakeholders to enter tourism markets or the decision-making arena (Duffy, 2006a, 2006b; Schilcher, 2008).

3. The tourist bubble

An important barrier for local stakeholders to enter tourism markets is the vertical organisation of the tourism value chain. In this structure, dominant international tour operators assemble individual components of the tourism product into a package product (Mosedale, 2006). This package turns into a travel experience in which tourists are led from the airport to the main attractions and back to the airport, creating a so-called tourist bubble (Carrier & Macleod, 2005; Cohen, 1972). The concept of the tourist bubble is built upon the ‘environmental bubble’ of Cohen (1972), used to express the touristic *Eigenwelt* that a tourist experiences during holidays (Cohen, 1972; Jaakson, 2004). The protective walls of the bubble cushion shocks for unfamiliar encounters and create a physical and psychological space ‘in which a favourable version of local reality is presented to tourists’ (van der Zee & Go, 2014, p. 5).

In the bubble, opportunities for local stakeholders to link labour, products and services to the tourism value chain are reduced. In other words, the possibility of creating local linkages, together with the degree or intensity of these linkages, generally depends on the strategies of empowered, often multinational tourism stakeholders of the tourism value chain that have a central position in the tourist bubble. Moreover, previous research showed that these bubbles create a spatial and social imbalance of tourism benefits inside the destination (Jaakson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1999). Judd (1999), studying the concept in an urban tourism context, suggested that ‘tourist bubbles create islands of affluence that are sharply differentiated and segregated from the surrounding urban

landscape' (Judd, 1999, p. 53). Hence, to overcome these spatial and social barriers, the structure of the tourism value chain needs to be governed in such a way that local stakeholders are empowered to create linkages to enter the tourism value chain (Cole, 2006; Sofield, 2003).

4. Research methods

To focus on governance in the tourism value chain and to find key actors and processes that control the tourist bubble, the various stakeholders, their roles and mutual relationships first need to be identified at different scales (Boyd & Butler, 1996; Gereffi, Humphrey, & Sturgeon, 2005; Mosedale, 2006). During fieldwork (July 2012–January 2013), 74 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in Uganda ($n = 64$) as well as in Belgium and the Netherlands ($n = 10$) to grasp the role of various stakeholders on different scales in the Ugandan tourism sector and to identify their connection with the tourism value chain. In the data collection process, key stakeholders in the value chain were identified from a stakeholder list from Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) and from different tourism development plans, based on important positions in the stakeholders' model of Boyd and Butler (1996). This model, applied to ecotourism, shows that stakeholders on different scales have to be involved in the decision-making of tourism (Boyd & Butler, 1996). The respondents were selected by key informants who acted as a starting point for the snowball sampling technique. Interviews were undertaken with representatives from the private sector ($n = 46$), the public sector ($n = 12$), donor organisations ($n = 6$), national environmental groups ($n = 4$) and tourism interest groups ($n = 6$). Moreover, 7 focus group discussions with local communities were conducted in the area surrounding Kibale National Park (KNP) to triangulate the interview data on the impact of the tourism value chain at the destination scale. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and more than two hours. All semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed, read and coded using NVivo® 10 to identify relevant themes. In addition to the interviews, secondary data and documents were collected and analysed.

5. Study area

Uganda is an emerging tourism destination in Sub-Saharan Africa, of which the local economy in rural areas is characterised by subsistence agriculture, high poverty levels and limited livelihood options (UBOS, 2013; Vermeiren, Adiyia, & Loopmans, 2013). The country was a very popular tourism destination during the 1960s and 1970s, but the growth of tourism abruptly ended with the reign of Idi Amin (Ahebwa, 2012; Ellis & Bahiigwa, 2003). Since tourism re-emerged in the early 1990s on the political agenda after a long period of instability, international tourist arrivals have annually increased to reach 1.2 million in 2013 (Ahebwa & Katongole, 2015; Ministry of Tourism, 2014; UBOS, 2013). In 2014, tourism was the top foreign exchange earner in the national economy, preceding the sectors of remittances and coffee in foreign exchange (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014).

Tourism is used as a strategy by the Ugandan national government to alleviate poverty and develop rural areas. However, the sector is characterised by limited linkages between tourism and rural communities (Korutaro et al., 2013; National Planning Authority, 2010). The environs of KNP, located at 300 km west of Kampala (Figure 1), were selected for this study for multiple reasons; all related to the fact that KNP can be associated with a tourist bubble.

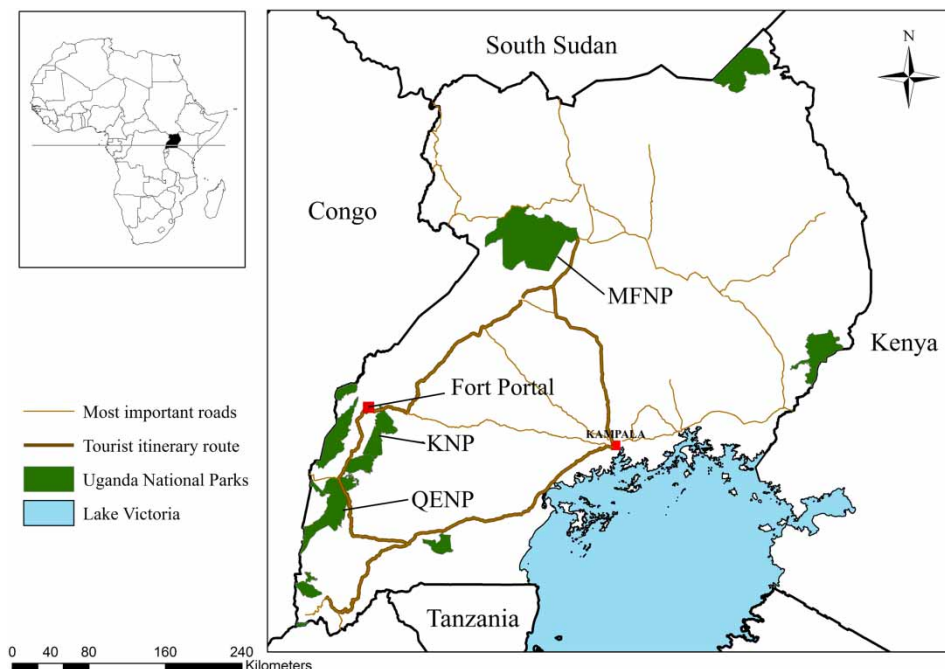


Figure 1. (Colour online) Location of KNP in Uganda. Adapted from IUCN and UNEP-WCMC (2015).

- (1) Tourism in Uganda largely focuses on the western part of the country, as this region encloses most of the country's comparative advantages and tourism attractions. For example, the five most visited national parks are all situated in the (south) west of the country and contain 92% of all leisure tourists who visit a national park in Uganda (Weiss & Messerli, 2012).
- (2) KNP has more than 10.000 visitors annually, and is listed fourth in the ranking of total visitor expenditures to national parks (8.2%) (Ahebwa & Katongole, 2015; UBOS, 2013). The development of asphalted roads ensures that each itinerary passes through Fort Portal (Figure 1). This major town adjacent to KNP has been earmarked as the 'tourism city' (Ministry of Tourism, 2013), since it is situated between the two most visited parks: Queen Elisabeth NP and Murchison Falls NP (Figure 1). As a result, the area provides a potential spatial hub of the tourism value chain where local linkages can be established (Adiyia et al., 2014).
- (3) KNP has the protected status of a national park, although it does not have the exceptional status of UNESCO World Heritage. Therefore, it could be used as an interesting exemplary case for other national parks and protected areas inside tourist bubbles in Sub-Saharan Africa.

6. Tourism governance in Uganda

6.1. Structure of the Ugandan tourism value chain

On a national scale, the Ugandan tourism sector is horizontally managed by a complex network of stakeholders and institutions. This is led by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife

and Heritage (MTWH) and six semi-autonomous parastatal institutions with different mandates that should provide an enabling and competitive environment for the private sector (International Trade Centre, 2011; National Planning Authority, 2010). The two most important are the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), with a mandate for conservation and management of the national parks, and the UTB, in charge of destination marketing and product development (International Trade Centre, 2011; Korutaro et al., 2013). MTWH is linked with bilateral and multilateral donor organisations as well as NGOs. These organisations play a role in financing tourism and conservation projects on different scales and giving technical advice to MTWH and local stakeholders.

According to the National Development Plan, the private sector is supposed to develop the tourism value chain by investments in sub products on the destination scale, such as local accommodation, transport and catering (Korutaro et al., 2013; National Planning Authority, 2010). The private sector has organised itself per sub-segment into 10 associations¹ to increase communication and join forces in attaining more public sector support (National Planning Authority, 2010). These important stakeholders in the chain are summarised with their specific roles in Table 2.

Vertically, the main stakeholders in the tourism value chain are intermediaries such as global tour operators, offering sub products for different destinations as a wholesaler, or travel agencies, offering information on sub products as a retailer (Christian, Fernandez-Stark, Ahmed, & Gereffi, 2011; Romero & Tejada, 2011). Since the consumption of the tourism product is spatially fixed in the destination and international tourists are generally not familiar with travelling towards developing countries, tourists tend to purchase packages of individual sub products, such as air transfer, local accommodation and local transport, from tourism intermediaries (Mosedale, 2006; Song et al., 2012). In this process, nationally based tour operators, partly or fully owned by foreign investors, act as agents for global tour operators by coordinating in-country tours on the destination scale (Christian et al., 2011). They are vital in the chain since both international and domestic tourists can directly purchase sub products and package products with them (Christian et al., 2011).

Table 2. List of most important actors with corresponding functions.

Actors within the value chain	Function
MTWH	Regulation, control, planning and strategic development of tourism and natural and cultural heritage
UWA	Conservation, park management
UTB	Marketing and promotion, product development and quality assurance
Interest groups (AUTO, USAGA and UTA)	Representation of the private sector
Donor organisations (USAID, World Bank, UNDP, etc.)	Funding and technical advice
Environmental groups (national and international)	Research and interest delegation, possibly project funding, education
Local stakeholders (UCOTA)	Inactive or active local involvement

AUTO, Association of Ugandan Tour Operators: umbrella organisation for tour operator companies in Uganda; USAGA, Uganda Safari Guides Association: organisation for safari and bird guides in Uganda. UTA, Uganda Tourism Association: covering organisation for the whole private tourism industry. Sector-related organisations such as AUTO, USAGA, Uganda Hotel Owner's Association (UHOA) and The Uganda Association of Tourism Training Institutions (UATTI) are included. UCOTA, UGANDA Community Tourism Association: organisation with interests in community-based tourism.

On local scales, stakeholders are less influential in structuring the overall value chain relations, while their empowerment is key in the use of tourism for regional development purposes (Cole, 2006; Sofield, 2003). Figure 2 displays the simplified structure of the tourism value chain in Uganda, with various arrows portraying different types of relationships between the stakeholders.

6.2. Governance complexities

The horizontal and vertical structure of the tourism value chain shows important complexities in aligning internal and external governance connections. Within the public domain on the national scale, analysis of the most important tourism documents confirms functional overlaps between government-led bodies due to lack of communication and coordination mechanisms (Korutaro et al., 2013). Moreover, due to other prioritised economic sectors such as health, education and law and order, the government allocates insufficient resources to the tourism sector (tourism officer, MWTH, personal communication, August 28, 2012). This situation results in systematically understaffed and underfunded governmental tourism agencies (International Trade Centre, 2011; Weiss & Messerli, 2012). For example, in 2012, the government invested approximately US\$4.5 million in the sector, corresponding to 0.13% of its total budget, while the sector provided more than US\$2 billion to the national economy, corresponding to 8.8% of GDP (Weiss & Messerli, 2012). As a result of limited expertise and budget within UTB, the promotion of Uganda as a tourism destination is largely left to the private sector, such as national tour operators and lodge owners.

There is really a funding problem. People complain here, because we compare it with other countries like Kenya, Tanzania. (...) Rwanda is spending 5 million dollars for marketing. Tanzania had 8, Kenya has 28 million dollar. And they give us 300.000 dollar, which is not a lot. That is very important. Because if you make a plan, the plan is dependent on funding and the funding is not there yet. (Administrative manager, UTB)

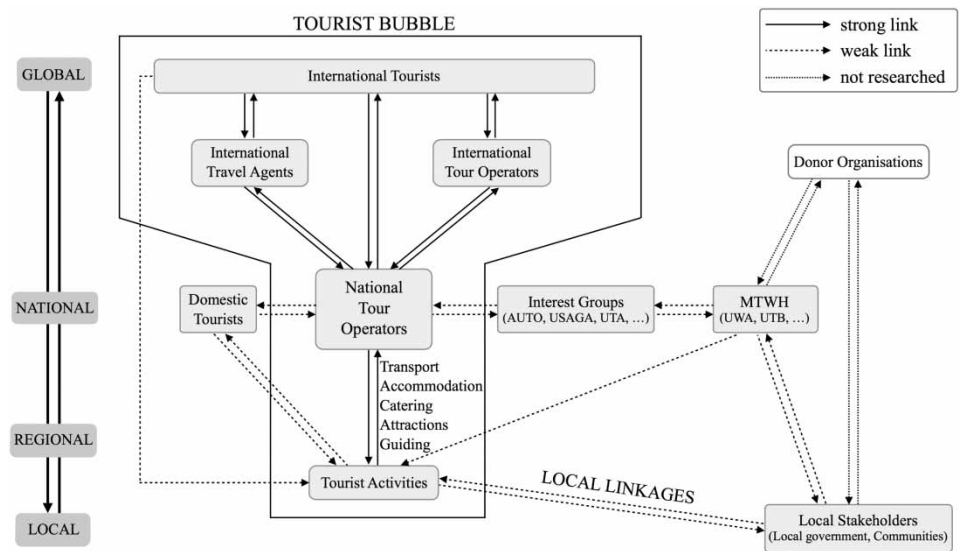


Figure 2. Simplified structure of tourism value chain in Uganda.

It is my job to educate and re-educate my clients about the country as a whole, before I even get to the chance of selling them my services, my expertise, my intelligence, my vehicles, my drivers. I have to tell them about the lodges, the environment, the parks, etc. This cost is being borne by me at my own expense. Tour operators are spending own money on promoting Uganda. And that is not what is supposed to happen. (Foreign tour operator)

Hence, horizontal internal complexities importantly shape the content of horizontal external relations. Referring to the example of insufficient resource allocation, the public domain planned to install a VAT levy of 18% for the private domain to collect resources in order to increase governmental tourism resources to 1.8% of total government budget (National Planning Authority, 2010). However, the levy has been discarded on official request of AUTO, the association of tour operators, because the private sector does not want to take responsibility for additional resource collections (chairman AUTO, personal communication, August 22, 2012). In their latest Master Plan (2014–2024), funded by UNDP, MTWH acknowledges that current funding arrangements in the tourism sector ‘are inadequate in relation to the responsibilities fulfilled’ (Ministry of Tourism, 2014, p. 22). In this regard, the Master Plan proposes several financing strategies to address funding issues and mobilise investments funds from various resources.

To enhance communication and collaboration between different private tourism associations and to put forward and represent private sector interests towards the government (Weiss & Messerli, 2012), the Uganda Tourism Association (UTA) was founded as a private sector umbrella organisation. However, several respondents confirmed that the UTA is not effectively functioning for several reasons:

UTA is weak because there is an internal association rivalry. Where politics is, money is also, so some of the problems spring from resource locations. (. . .) You find that AUTO and UHOA do not like to subject themselves to the authority of the UTA. AUTO gets resources from the sale of gorilla permits. Now, UTA likes to control that, but AUTO says ‘no, that is mine’. (Managing Director, UTB)

From 2014 onwards, UTA attempts to overcome this by developing a strategic plan. However, UTA still struggles with funding gaps as the organisation needs US\$ 1.3 million to implement its strategic objectives in the coming five years (2014–2019) (Katon-gole & Ahebwa, 2014).

When analysing the vertical internal governance system, local tourism matters are handled by the local district government² in which tourism resources are located (Mackenzie, 2012b). However, due to the inexistence of local tourism departments, general district officers without any tourism background manage tourism issues in absence of a MTWH coordination mechanism, resulting in weakly addressed and implemented matters on a sub-national level (Korutaro et al., 2013; Weiss & Messerli, 2012). This problem of a lack of knowledge by tourism governmental officials is widespread and occurs even on the national level:

Our leaders have never studied tourism, they have no feeling for being in the tourism industry and they will never make a policy that is a committed to a pro-poor tourism development. (President USAGA)

Timothy (1998) showed that lower level governments are key in the successful implementation of tourism initiatives on the national scale. Several authors have addressed challenges of local-level governance around national parks in Uganda (Ahebwa, van der Duim, & Sandbrook, 2012; Mackenzie, 2012b). For example, a policy of tourism revenue sharing

has been set up by UWA to compensate communities around national parks for the costs of tourism and conservation on their livelihoods (Mackenzie, 2012b). As a result, local governments are given 20% of park entrance fees to establish public utilities in communities, such as schools, health centres and road infrastructure (Ahebwa et al., 2012; Archabald & Naughton-treves, 2001; Mackenzie, 2012b). However, the outcome of these arrangements has achieved mixed success, insufficiently compensating and unequally distributing the surrounding communities (Archabald & Naughton-treves, 2001; Mackenzie, 2012a).

6.3. *The tourist bubble*

As demonstrated in Figure 2, nationally based tour operators have a central position in the value chain. They directly and indirectly manage in-country tours for both international and domestic tourists on the destination scale. Almost all nationally based tour operators in Uganda are located in Kampala or near Entebbe International Airport (Korutaro et al., 2013; Weiss & Messerli, 2012).

We pick up the tourists at the airport and drop them off on their way back. Everything in between, we have organised it: gorilla permits, transportation, accommodation, special activities the client wants to do, meals, drinks, everything is included and planned in the offer. (Foreign tour operator)

The most successful nationally based tour operators in Uganda are partly or fully owned by foreign investors, attracted by an investment-friendly economic environment. Their position in the value chain is empowered in three different ways. First, global tour operators and travel agencies tend to prefer nationally based tour operators owned by foreign investors to tour operators by local investors, based on the assumption that they have a higher capacity to meet international service standards (Christian et al., 2011). Similarly, popular international travel guides list foreign-owned national tour operators as being more experienced and reliable (Briggs & Roberts, 2010). Second, these foreign tour operators tend to provide accommodation in own lodges in the national parks (Korutaro et al., 2013; lodge owner, personal communication, August 22, 2012), strengthening the creation of a tourist bubble with limited local linkages. Third, their position is empowered as the financial capital to back up their business allows their voices to be heard in UWA through representation in the AUTO. Local enterprises, interested to enter the value chain, perceive these conditions as barriers, resulting in an underrepresentation in AUTO and hence in the value chain.

Local tour operators can also do business, but they need to register under AUTO. To register, you need to meet certain criteria. You need to have a specified number of guides who know international languages, trained staff and certified drivers with a well-maintained vehicle with a roof opening, nice seats, nice sitting windows, good mechanical condition and insurances in case of accidents. (Tourism officer, MTWH)

The above picture reflects a situation that increasingly empowers large tour operators in the sense that they socially and spatially shape the tourist bubble by controlling both tourist movements and their activities in the destination (Song et al., 2012). The strong position of tour operators results in a situation in which disempowered local stakeholders are depending on them for developing and marketing tourism products. This power imbalance socially and spatially fixes the boundaries of the tourist bubble, in which nationally based tour operators decide to what extent local stakeholders are able to link their products to the

tourism value chain and, therefore, to what extent tourism contributes to poverty alleviation and sustainable regional development in terms of local linkages. Several respondents argue that the success of a local enterprise or activity depends on its proximity to the tourism circuit, confirming Jaakson (2004) who indicated the presence of a strong spatial core and a weak transition zone in the bubble:

The guy (. . .) who has a farm over there may be beautiful, but is not along the road. Activities should be organised along the main routes between the national parks. And if they are well developed, tourists stay longer in Uganda. The longer you get them to stay in the country, the more money all of us get. (Foreign tour operator)

Your activity has to be on the circuit. Because very few tour companies divert from the firmly set circuit. (International lodge owner)

It is clear that the international stakeholders need incentives to reshape the tourist bubble. Therefore, one should actively look for tools to facilitate the process of reshaping the bubble. Korutaro et al. (2013) list several strategies to reshape the bubble such as training and educating communities, investing in capacity building, linking communities to private sector, providing soft loans to enable communities starting tourism-related businesses and helping to organise these communities into associations to offer accommodation facilities or homestays. In summary, these strategies identify the barriers for entry for communities and suggest ways to enable them to be part of the tourism value chain. In their pursuance to actively promote tourism and stimulate poverty alleviation and regional development in remote areas, the Ugandan government puts cultural tourism development forward as a strategy to enlarge the existing product diversity (Ministry of Tourism, 2013; National Planning Authority, 2010).

7. Cultural activities: a strategy to reshape the bubble?

Often, the perception lingers that international tourists in developing countries focus on the natural assets. Indeed, a number of high-end tourists travel to Uganda for primate tracking and wildlife safaris, but those tourists comprise a minority (5.5%) of total 1.2 million international arrivals (Ahebwa & Katongole, 2015; UBOS, 2013). The high-end tourists are important for the tourism sector as their average expenditure of US\$3563 is significantly higher compared to other tourists visiting Uganda (Korutaro et al., 2013). Several respondents argue that, apart from this nature-based focus, there is a potential market for experiencing cultural activities in Uganda. Cultural tourism products in Uganda consist of traditional performances of music and dance, community walks, storytelling, homestays and handicrafts. This is confirmed by a UTB report displaying national tourism statistics in which travel purposes related to cultural tourism were estimated at 19% of international arrivals in 2012 (Korutaro et al., 2013).

During our fieldwork, respondents confirmed the potential of cultural activities, especially for the large domestic market. However, governmental organisations in Uganda – similar to many other developing countries – place little emphasis on domestic tourism, even though first signs of change could be identified in the cooperation aims of MTWH and UTA (Katongole & Ahebwa, 2014; Ministry of Tourism, 2014).

Cultural tourism is supposed to be a big area for many domestic tourists and tourists from our neighbouring countries, but it has been a largely neglected area. The product development has been focused on wildlife and not much on culture. Now, the overall domestic market is not

interested in going to track chimps. Even if you give them [domestic tourists] 1 million Shillings, they would spend it and not going to the national parks. (...) I think one of the main problems is that tourism is private sector driven. Some of those cultural attractions, no private sector can invest in them because they [private sector] do not make money from it. We think that the nature of tourism being private sector driven is a problem for this [cultural] development. (Tourism officer, MWTH)

Analysis shows that the few cultural activities that are offered for tourism are also located inside the tourist bubble. One example is an organised village walk near KNP's entrance. Part of the revenues of this village walk are distributed by a local organisation (Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development or KAFRED) in community projects, such as a secondary school, a health unit and a running water project (Nyakaana & Ahebwa, 2011; founding member KAFRED, personal communication, August 6, 2012). In addition, KAFRED allows a local women's group to sell handicrafts to tourists at their main offices; 90% of the handicraft revenues are transmitted to the individual household budgets and the remaining 10% goes to the maintenance of a nursery school, established by the women's group (managing director Bigodi's Women's Group, personal communication, August 8, 2012). It is interesting to notice that KAFRED managed to intrude into the value chain as a local stakeholder and reshape the tourist bubble. According to several respondents, KAFRED is able to successfully link their activities to the tourism value chain because of their strategic location next to KNP's entrance:

KAFRED is successful because they are near a national park. Bigodi is next to Kibale National Park with the chimps, so everybody goes to Bigodi. In other places the local community was also interested and we tried to encourage it but no tourists came. (Local tour operator)

Tour operators partly or fully owned by foreign investors, on the one hand, and community-based organisations and tour operators owned by locals, on the other hand, acknowledge the importance of reshaping the bubble by cultural activities in the context of regional development. However, the former opines that developing cultural activities is non-profitable and, therefore, they can only be included on specific tourist demand. The latter state that cultural activities should be included in itineraries, stressing its large potential growing market due to a high diversity and relatively low cost.

Our offer in cultural activities is limited, because the cultural and community aspects are more difficult to express and sell over the internet. (...) The level that they [tourists] want to be involved in local culture and communities depends on the clients themselves and we adjust the itinerary on demand. But the reason they come is predominantly for the gorillas and, unfortunately, there is more money to make out of gorillas. (Foreign tour operator)

Why should I sell only gorilla trekking, over and over again? Uganda has much more, but you have to sell it as much more. (...) The element of culture should be more developed in a dynamic way. Now, 200 ladies in a village sell baskets, all doing the same thing. I mean, you see basket weaving everywhere. They should include tea products, candles, and bee products! Of course it has to do with the institutionalization. And are they underfunded? Yes! But who wants to put more money in it, if government is not doing anything? (Foreign tour operator)

What we do after taking all those tourists to see the animals, to see everything, we always ask; what was your best activity here? And they answer: 'Oh, my visit to those people in the village or this visit to the cultural group is still in the memory.' So that shows if it is well marketed, if well packaged, it has a very big potential. (Local tour operator)

8. Discussion

Results indicate two main reasons why cultural activities are barely incorporated into the Ugandan tourism circuit as a tool to reshape the tourist bubble. First, MTWH creates barriers for local stakeholders, interested to expand the bubble and to enter the international tourism value chain, by further empowering the position of registered nationally based foreign-owned tour operators. Second, empowered private stakeholders are unwilling to include poorly developed, non-profitable tourism products in their itineraries. The Ugandan government has a clear role in this decision-making process since the potential of cultural tourism depends on destination marketing and product development. Analysis shows that MTWH fails in developing tourism and allocating resources to pro-poor strategies due to internal horizontal and vertical governance issues, caused by a lack of expertise and collaboration.

Furthermore, results confirm that it is too simplistic to blame the empowered position of profit-oriented international companies with little social conscience for hampering tourism development in developing countries (Erskine & Meyer, 2012; Meyer, 2013). Although foreign tour operators are empowered in the value chain because of an inherent advantage due to the international origin of leisure tourists in developing countries (Scheyvens, 2011), multi-scalar internal governance complexities undermine stable external governance mechanisms, such as public–private partnerships. These are necessary to establish local linkages in the value chain and to maximise the poverty alleviation potential of tourism on a local scale.

Provided meeting international standards and being profitable, cultural tourism developments are viable in the tourist bubble and function as a catalyst in creating linkages between local communities and the tourism value chain by increasing the degree of local inclusiveness. However, it is clear that cultural activities outside the tourist bubble are not viable, but result in unsuccessful attempts of local stakeholders to link with the tourism value chain. In other words, cultural activities are a potential tool to adjust the social boundaries of the tourist bubble, but it is much harder to reshape the spatial boundaries of the bubble (Figure 3). To spatially burst the bubble, existing multi-scalar internal governance complexities should be resolved to create stable external governance mechanisms. *Internally*, the government should clearly delineate the functional boundaries between the different government-led bodies and evaluate their functional capacities. Moreover, the government should further integrate tourism planning in local government structures and develop local tourism departments in which tourism issues are handled by qualified experts in the field. It is not sufficient to only allocate resources for tourism promotion without investing in (1) facilitating the linkage of local labour, products and services to the sector, (2) awareness building among local stakeholders to develop quality products and tap in the domestic tourism market and (3) road infrastructure as to create a physical accessible link with the value chain. Moreover, stable *external* governance mechanisms, such as public–private partnerships, could be built to improve the quality of tourism institutions, providing a robust human resources base needed to resolve existing skill and knowledge gaps among different government-led bodies.

Finally, the value chain needs to be governed in a way that local stakeholders are empowered to overcome existing barriers to enter such as a lack of financial investments, commercial experience and high responsibility levels (Christian, 2012; Schilcher, 2008). All measurements combined should allow increasing local empowerment in the tourism production system and facilitate to access to the tourism value chain as a supplier or as a complementary product provider, to break the tourist bubble by – socially and spatially – enlarging the product.

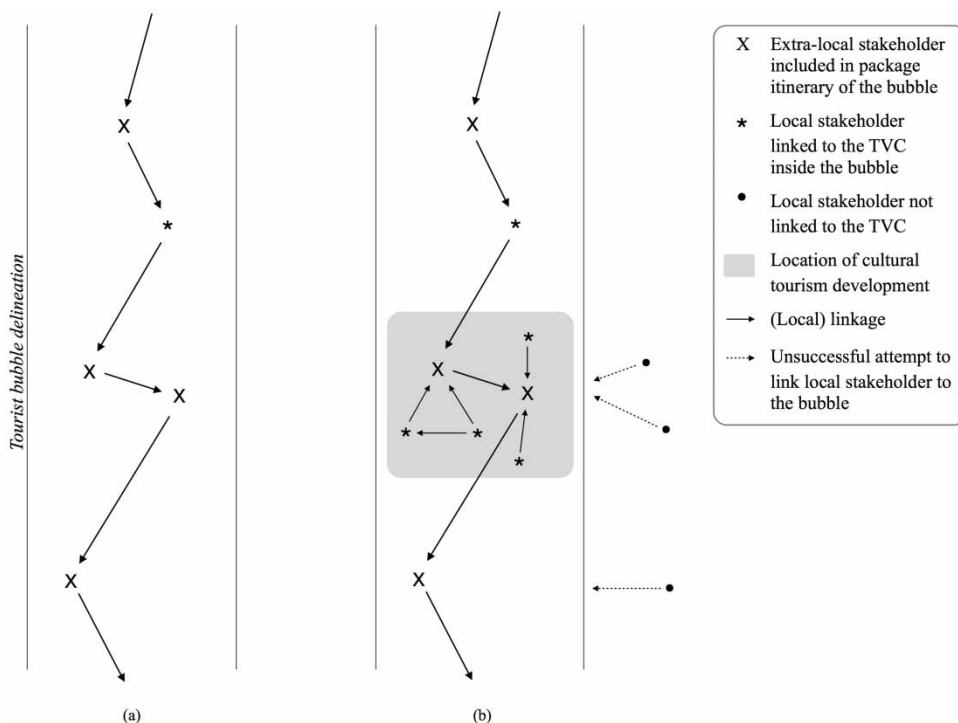


Figure 3. Simplified structure of (a) the tourist bubble and (b) the role of cultural activities in the tourist bubble.

9. Conclusion

In the presented study, key stakeholders were interviewed to assess the impact of governance of tourism value chain relations on the spatial and social delineation of the tourist bubble in Uganda. This study focused on the structure of and problems related to governance in the tourism value chain, as well as the possibilities of cultural activities to reshape the boundaries of the tourist bubble. Using an analytical benchmark to analyse governance characteristics, results show that tourism in Uganda is characterised by a field of tension between a weak institutional setting on one side and an uncoordinated and unregulated powerful private sector on the other. Multi-scalar internal governance complexities undermine stability of external governance mechanisms, such as public–private partnerships and private sector coordination. As a result, the sector lacks ability to govern the value chain in a dynamic way to overcome imbalances in value chain relations and corresponding barriers for local stakeholders to enter the tourism value chain. This leads to a spatially and socially fixed delineation of the tourist bubble, hampering the establishment of local linkages and decreasing the regional development and poverty alleviation potential of tourism in rural areas.

Cultural activities can reshape the social boundaries of the bubble by functioning as a catalyst in the creation of linkages between local communities and the tourism value chain. However, the catalyst role of cultural tourism developments is limited in the sense that they are not able to reshape the spatial bubble boundaries, unless internal governance favours the construction of physical links. To burst the bubble, the national scale has a pivotal role in internally governing the value chain in a way that (1) local stakeholders are empowered to

overcome existing barriers to enter and (2) international stakeholders are given incentives to reshape the bubble. In this argument, we acknowledge the central role of the state in the functioning and management of the overall tourism system and the integration of tourism in the overall planning system. This is in line with Bramwell (2011) who argues that the state does not only significantly influence governance for sustainable tourism and regional development when *strongly* organised but also when it is characterised by relative *absence* of a strong governing position. Investing in local linkages and awareness building, offering profitable cultural products of international standards, tapping in the domestic tourism market and including road infrastructure could be seen as opportunities to increase experiential value of tourism in Uganda and build on its regional development potential. Intangible cultural products have the advantage to be spatially widespread and, therefore, physical links are easier to establish than social links among the locals' awareness since social links require (1) awareness and a broader set of skills among the locals and (2) imagination and trust among the national and international tour operators.

Finally, the obstacles to sustainable tourism cannot be tackled with just one set of tools. Although it is clear that local linkages are one set of engines for regional development in developing countries, there is still a clear lack of academic research on complex development mechanisms of these linkages and their importance for local livelihoods of the rural poor.

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Notes

1. See Weiss & Messerli (2012) for an exhaustive list of associations.
2. The civil society is organised in a decentralised structure of five hierarchical council levels, in a declining hierarchical order: district, county, sub-county, village and parish levels (Mackenzie, 2012b).

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